

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF NEBRASKA

JAMES A. COUTTS,

Petitioner,

v.

DEPARTMENT OF
CORRECTIONAL SERVICES,
SCOTT FRAKES, MICHELLE
CAPPS, Warden, KEARNEY
COUNTY SHERIFF'S
DEPARTMENT, SCOTT WHITE,
Sheriff, CORY ZIOLA, Deputy
Sheriff, SHANE MONTHEY, Deputy
Sheriff, JUSTIN GLANZER, Deputy
Sheriff, THOMAS G. LIESKE,
Attorney, and STATE OF
NEBRASKA,

Respondents.

8:19CV218

MEMORANDUM AND ORDER

This matter is before the court on preliminary review of Petitioner James A. Coutts' Petition for Writ of Habeas Corpus (Filing No. 1) brought pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 2254. The purpose of this review is to determine whether Petitioner's claims, when liberally construed, are potentially cognizable in federal court. Condensed and summarized for clarity, Petitioner's claims are:

- Claim¹ One: In CR 09-12 in the District Court of Kearney County, Nebraska, Petitioner was denied a speedy trial in violation of the Sixth Amendment.
- Claim Two: In CR 09-12 in the District Court of Kearney County, Nebraska, the trial court denied Petitioner his right to effective assistance of counsel under the Sixth Amendment when the court refused to replace appointed counsel (a) despite the fact that there was a complete breakdown in communication between the lawyer and Petitioner and (b) because the lawyer was not able to, and did not, dedicate proper attention to Petitioner's case due to the serious illness that counsel's wife was suffering.
- Claim Three: In CR 09-12 in the District Court of Kearney County, Nebraska, Petitioner was denied due process of law because he was deprived of needed mental health medications throughout the proceedings.

The court determines that these claims, when liberally construed, are potentially cognizable in federal court. However, the court cautions Petitioner that no determination has been made regarding the merits of these claims or any defenses to them or whether there are procedural bars that will prevent Petitioner from obtaining the relief sought.

¹ *Two things to note:* * Petitioner's habeas petition is very hard to understand. Moreover, he raises state law issues (such as Nebraska's speedy trial law or Nebraska medical negligence issues) that are not cognizable in a federal habeas corpus action. In any event, to the degree Petitioner asserts other claims not described above, all those claims are dismissed with prejudice. ** Additionally, Petitioner has separately challenged his conviction in CR 09-16 in this court at 8:19CV294. When the filing fee is paid or leave to proceed in forma pauperis is granted, that case will be progressed separately.

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED that:

1. Upon initial review of the habeas corpus petition (Filing No. 1), the court preliminarily determines that Petitioner's claims, as they are set forth in this Memorandum and Order, are potentially cognizable in federal court.

2. By **August 26, 2019**, Respondent must file a motion for summary judgment or state court records in support of an answer. The clerk of the court is directed to set a pro se case management deadline in this case using the following text: **August 26, 2019**: deadline for Respondent to file state court records in support of answer or motion for summary judgment.

3. If Respondent elects to file a motion for summary judgment, the following procedures must be followed by Respondent and Petitioner:

- A. The motion for summary judgment must be accompanied by a separate brief, submitted at the time the motion is filed.
- B. The motion for summary judgment must be supported by any state court records that are necessary to support the motion. Those records must be contained in a separate filing entitled: "Designation of State Court Records in Support of Motion for Summary Judgment."
- C. Copies of the motion for summary judgment, the designation, including state court records, and Respondent's brief must be served on Petitioner *except* that Respondent is only required to provide Petitioner with a copy of the specific pages of the record that are cited in Respondent's motion and brief. In the event that the designation of state court records is deemed insufficient by Petitioner or Petitioner needs additional records from the

designation, Petitioner may file a motion with the court requesting additional documents. Such motion must set forth the documents requested and the reasons the documents are relevant to the cognizable claims.

- D. No later than 30 days following the filing of the motion for summary judgment, Petitioner must file and serve a brief in opposition to the motion for summary judgment. Petitioner may not submit other documents unless directed to do so by the court.
- E. No later than 30 days after Petitioner's brief is filed, Respondent must file and serve a reply brief. In the event that Respondent elects not to file a reply brief, he should inform the court by filing a notice stating that he will not file a reply brief and that the motion is therefore fully submitted for decision.
- F. If the motion for summary judgment is denied, Respondent must file an answer, a designation and a brief that complies with terms of this order. (*See* the following paragraph.) The documents must be filed no later than 30 days after the denial of the motion for summary judgment. **Respondent is warned that failure to file an answer, a designation and a brief in a timely fashion may result in the imposition of sanctions, including Petitioner's release.**

4. If Respondent elects to file an answer, the following procedures must be followed by Respondent and Petitioner:

- A. By **August 26, 2019**, Respondent must file all state court records that are relevant to the cognizable claims. *See, e.g.*, Rule 5(c)-(d) of the *Rules Governing Section 2254 Cases in the United States*

District Courts. Those records must be contained in a separate filing entitled: “Designation of State Court Records in Support of Answer.”

- B. No later than 30 days after the relevant state court records are filed, Respondent must file an answer. The answer must be accompanied by a separate brief, submitted at the time the answer is filed. Both the answer and the brief must address all matters germane to the case including, but not limited to, the merits of Petitioner’s allegations that have survived initial review, and whether any claim is barred by a failure to exhaust state remedies, a procedural bar, non-retroactivity, a statute of limitations, or because the petition is an unauthorized second or successive petition. *See, e.g., Rules 5(b) and 9 of the Rules Governing Section 2254 Cases in the United States District Courts.*
- C. Copies of the answer, the designation, and Respondent’s brief must be served on Petitioner at the time they are filed with the court *except* that Respondent is only required to provide Petitioner with a copy of the specific pages of the designated record that are cited in Respondent’s answer and brief. In the event that the designation of state court records is deemed insufficient by Petitioner or Petitioner needs additional records from the designation, Petitioner may file a motion with the court requesting additional documents. Such motion must set forth the documents requested and the reasons the documents are relevant to the cognizable claims.
- D. No later than 30 days after Respondent’s brief is filed, Petitioner must file and serve a brief in response. Petitioner must not submit any other documents unless directed to do so by the court.

- E. No later than 30 days after Petitioner's brief is filed, Respondent must file and serve a reply brief. In the event that Respondent elects not to file a reply brief, he should inform the court by filing a notice stating that he will not file a reply brief and that the merits of the petition are therefore fully submitted for decision.
- F. The clerk of the court is directed to set a pro se case management deadline in this case using the following text: **September 23, 2019**: check for Respondent's answer and separate brief.

5. No discovery shall be undertaken without leave of the court. *See* Rule 6 of the *Rules Governing Section 2254 Cases in the United States District Courts*.

DATED this 10th day of July, 2019.

BY THE COURT:

s/ Richard G. Kopf
Senior United States District Judge